

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 are in this application and are presented for consideration. By this amendment, Applicant has amended claims 1, 11, 14 and 20. Applicant has also added new claims 21-24.

Claim 11 has been objected to because of a minor informality.

Applicant has amended claim 11 to address this issue. Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the careful review of the claims.

Claims 1-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Kogstrom (U.S. 2,921,809).

Kogstrom discloses a ball joint construction comprising a ball stud member having a ball 10 and a tapered stud 12. The stud is mounted in a portion of a body member 14 and held in place by a nut 16. Surrounding the stud 12 is a nylon ring 40 having a flange 43 provided with a flat upper surface bearing against the body member 14. The underside of the flange 42 is annularly serrated, and this serrated surface cooperates with a similar surface surrounding the top edge 46 of a skirt 50 formed of rubber having a lower beaded edge 52 anchored in an annular groove 54 surrounding the top of the socket member 20. The Office Action takes the position that the body member 14 is the equivalent of the support ring of the present invention. The Office Action also defines the nylon ring 40 as the equivalent of the sealing element of the present invention. The Office Action further equates the skirt 50 to the connection component of the present invention.

Applicant has amended claim 1 to provide that a connection component is located at a

first axial distance from a joint ball portion that is greater than an axial distance from the joint ball portion to a support ring. Kogstrom fails to teach or suggest such a feature. Compared with the present invention, Figure 2 of Kogstrom clearly shows that the body member 14 is seated on the shaft 12 at a greater axial distance to the joint ball 10 than the nylon ring 40. As such, it is Applicant's position that the body member 14 of Kogstrom is not the equivalent of the support ring of the present invention. Kogstrom clearly teaches that the skirt 50 is not at an axial distance from the joint ball 10 that is greater than the axial distance between the body member 14 and the joint ball 10. As such, the prior art as a whole takes a different approach and fails to disclose each feature as recited in claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider claim 1 as now presented and all claims that depend thereon.

Kogstrom also provides no teaching or suggestion for a sealing bellows that is in contact with a support ring as recited in claim 14. Based on the interpretation taken in the Office Action, there is no sealing bellows that is in contact with body member 14 of Kogstrom. In contrast to Kogstrom, the sealing element of the present invention seals the connection between the connection component and the support ring while the sealing bellows seals the area between the support ring and the ball and socket joint housing. This advantageously provides a double sealing feature that significantly reduces moisture and contaminants from entering the ball and socket joint. This dramatically increases the service life of the ball and socket joint since the double sealing feature prevents corrosion. Kogstrom fails to disclose such corrosion preventing advantages since Kogstrom is void of any teaching or suggestion of a sealing bellows that is in

contact with a support ring as claimed. As such, the prior art as a whole takes a different approach and fails to disclose each feature of the claimed combination. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider claim 14 as now presented and all claims that depend thereon.

Applicant has added new claims 21-24. New independent claim 24 provides for features similar to claims 1 and 14, but in different claim language. New dependent claims 21-23 are based on amended claim 1 and further clarify the features of the invention. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider new claims 21-24.

Favorable consideration on the merits is requested.

Respectfully submitted
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